

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE LAW AND THE STATUS OF THE RUSYN LANGUAGE

The Carpatho-Rusyn Consortium of North America, in solidarity with Carpatho-Rusyn organizations in the Transcarpathian oblast of Ukraine, express strong opposition to any efforts that would remove Rusyn from the list of legally approved regional languages in Ukraine.

- Independent Ukraine's first constitution (1996) proclaimed Ukrainian as the state language, generating dissatisfaction among speakers of Russian and numerous minority languages.
- In an effort to address concerns surrounding conflicts, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a bill "The Principles of the State's Language Policies," which was signed into law (No. 5029-VI) by President Viktor Yanukovich on August 8, 2012.
- The law provided for seventeen recognized "regional" languages used by Ukrainian citizens of various ethnolinguistic backgrounds, one of which is Rusyn.
- In response to criticism, President Yanukovich convened a "working group" of advisors to propose amendments to the language law. The "working group" has already submitted its revisions in the expectation that parliament will pass a revised language law.
- As part of those revisions, one language, Rusyn, was deleted from the list of regional languages.
- The explanation given by the presidential "working group" is that Rusyn is just a "dialect of Ukrainian." This explanation does not bear scrutiny either on practical or scholarly grounds.
- The Rusyn language is recognized in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Serbia and Croatia. It has been codified, taught in schools, and is used in civic and cultural life in all those countries. Only Ukraine refuses to recognize Carpatho-Rusyns as a distinct nationality and Rusyn as a distinct language.
- The argument for excluding Rusyn as a "dialect" is politically motivated and intellectually dishonest. Languages once dismissed as "dialects" include Luxembourgish, Macedonian, and Ukrainian.
- For Europe's stateless peoples—Catalans, Welsh, Basques, Carpatho-Rusyns—their native language, or mother tongue, is the very essence of their identity.
- Removing Rusyn from a list of seventeen regional languages will do nothing to enhance the status of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine. The proposal to remove Rusyn from this same list, thereby denying the language and identity of its Carpatho-Rusyn citizens, constitutes a blatant violation of human rights.
- Rusyn should not be removed from the list of regional languages of Ukraine.